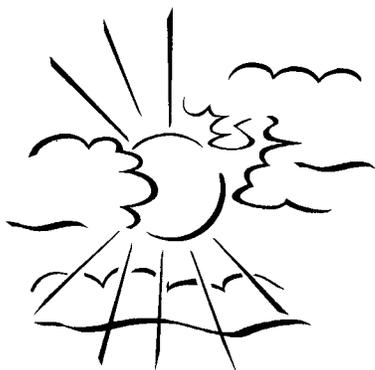


*Department
of
Human
Services*

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394



*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips

Tuesday, September 20, 2005

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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Overwhelming Response to Michigan's Hurricane Relief Efforts State of Michigan Hurricane Helpline Shuts

Michigan has welcomed hundreds of hurricane evacuees at Fort Custer Training Center near Battle Creek, and I can't begin to thank you all enough – the many local and state officials, businesses, non-profit organizations, and volunteers – for all that you have done to make these new neighbors feel welcome and safe in Michigan. Evacuees are housed temporarily at Fort Custer until they can be assigned to more permanent housing in communities around the state. We are working closely with mayors to place evacuees in Michigan communities. In addition, we are working with non-profit organizations as well as health and human service organizations to ensure that the families' transition and time in Michigan is comfortable.

The generosity of Michiganians has been overwhelming. More than 7,000 citizens and businesses have called the state's Hurricane Helpline to donate goods and services and housing to help evacuees. Many more are continuing to donate money to the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and other relief efforts.

The state has also deployed more than 600 men and women from the Michigan National Guard; more than 30 Michigan State Police, who were part of a larger group of state and local law enforcement officials; and some 50 conservation officers from the Department of Natural Resources, among others. The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) has helped to identify available housing, the Michigan Unemployment Agency is taking unemployment insurance claims by telephone from Louisiana workers left jobless, and the Department of Human Services staff accompanied evacuees sent to Michigan for orientation meetings. These are just a few examples of the State of Michigan Hurricane Katrina relief efforts. It seems that the entire state has pitched in one way or another.

As of September 13, we shut down the State of Michigan Hurricane Katrina Relief Hotline, because we have a fairly complete inventory of items, and the number of calls coming in to the hotline have dropped off dramatically. While you may not have received a call yet for use of your donated items, please know that it's still possible they will be needed within the coming weeks and/or months as relief agencies complete assessments of hurricane victims' needs.

At this time, the most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to relief funds that have been established by the respective state governments in the disaster area. If you do wish to contribute to the ongoing hurricane relief efforts, we encourage you to make a cash contribution. Various organizations that are accepting donations for Hurricane Relief may be found by visiting the [Hurricane Relief Donations page](#).

Members of the health care community wishing to volunteer can register at the Department of Health and Human Services Web site: <https://volunteer.ccrf.hhs.gov>. Others wishing to volunteer should contact a local chapter of the American Red Cross. Hurricane Katrina evacuees who are now in Michigan may contact a local office of the

Michigan Department of Human Services to obtain information about assistance and temporary shelter, at www.michigan.gov/dhs.

KATRINA AFTERMATH: HELP WANTED:

Evacuees hunting for jobs get a hand

September 17, 2005

BY MARGARITA BAUZA
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

With a pregnant wife and a little one to care for, Hurricane Katrina evacuee Sherwin Malone drove himself to the Outback Steakhouse in Southfield and asked for a job.

Having worked at restaurants for 10 years, Malone, 25, knew where he could find work quickly. "Where there's a restaurant, there's a job," he said, smiling for the first time in days because he had finally found a place to work Wednesday.

"I had to earn some money. I need to support my wife," he said giving her a bear hug. Julia Malone, 25, is expecting twin boys in November. The couple also has a 4-year-old boy, Cuely.

"I'm not one to take handouts. I've worked all my life. That's just the way I am."

Dave Meslin, manager at the Outback in Southfield, couldn't have been happier to hire him.

"He's really on the ball," Meslin said. "He's a great kid. It's amazing how he hasn't let all this get to him."

Malone is one of hundreds of evacuees now living in Michigan, looking for a job or reporting to one for the first time since the deadly hurricane devastated their lives along the gulf coast nearly three weeks ago.

Their ability to find work largely will determine whether they'll stay in the state for good, leave for greener pastures or eventually return home, experts say.

It may not seem like Michigan has room for evacuees in search of jobs. The state's 6.7% unemployment rate is among the highest in the country. But experts say Michigan can handle the small influx of job seekers.

"I could see there being a problem if there were planeloads of people being dropped off, but that's not the case," said Robyn Boyle, an urban affairs professor at Wayne State University. Evacuees, some of whom have been in Michigan for two or three weeks, have come armed with a large range of skills. Malone has a lot of experience in kitchens, most recently at the Charter House CafÉ in New Orleans' French Quarter, known for the "best gumbo in town," he said. Hotels and homes around metro Detroit are housing cooks, bus drivers, medical assistants, assisted-living caregivers, registered nurses and at least one police officer.

Among those looking for work is Tanjie Watson, 31, of Biloxi, Miss., who drove to Detroit with her husband, Duane Watson, and their four children: Tanaija, 10; Duane Jr. (DJ), 8; Javon, 5, and Jaida, 6 months. The Red Cross set them up in rooms at the Homestead Inn in Southfield, a 14-day arrangement that ends in a week, she said. After that, she and her family must find their own place to live.

A licensed phlebotomist, Tanjie Watson had most recently worked at the reservation desk of a Biloxi hotel and casino. Now, she's juggling things like writing a new resume with the help of volunteers, looking for permanent housing, feeding her children and getting them off to school -- while tackling the challenges of starting a new life after losing everything. She hopes to get a job in health care.

"The first thing on my mind was that me and my children were safe," said Watson, who has family in Detroit. Her husband, a 31-year-old truck driver, also is looking for work.

"We're trying to find our way, but we don't really have funds," she said. "How are we going to find anything when we don't have funds?"

Local organizations are trying to help.

At the Ramada Inn and Convention Center in Southfield, which has housed about 360 evacuees since the beginning of September, volunteers are organizing a job room for evacuees in the area, not just those staying at that hotel, said volunteer Licia Harper of Ypsilanti.

Harper, who lost a job in marketing and is looking for work herself, drives to the Ramada almost daily from her home in Ypsilanti to help evacuees find work.

The hotel is in the process of compiling a database, tracking people's skills and experience. They have started compiling names of companies and networking organizations that have called to offer jobs.

Hotel staff and volunteers also are asking the community to donate interview clothes and office equipment and help draft resumes.

"We're hoping to start doing this by next Wednesday and start matching people up with companies within their fields," said Harper.

Employers like Meijer, the City of Southfield, Kroger, McDonald's and several temporary work agencies have been calling and putting their names on lists that indicate they have job openings. Carol Spann, director of global human resources at Valassis, a marketing company in Livonia, called to put her company's name on that list.

"We'd been hearing of all the nice things people are doing to be responsive, but what people really need is employment," Spann said. "We just wanted to do something that will really impact and help."

Spann has been contacting professional associations to gather other employers who would like to help evacuees find work.

"I know there's a lot of in-between work that needs to happen," she said. "People are trying to get driver's licenses and get organized. We're waiting to hear from the Ramada to see when they're ready."

At the Best Western Sterling Inn in Sterling Heights, which is housing 28 evacuees, half of them children, staff members have been "working feverishly" trying to help connect people with jobs, said general manager and co-owner Victor Martin.

One woman is closing in on a job as a hospital billing clerk, and a cook is close to landing a job at a Southfield Cajun-style restaurant, he said.

Employers like Kelly Services and MNP Corp., a Sterling Heights manufacturer, have called to offer jobs.

"Everyone's been trying to get everything done at one time," Victor said of evacuees, many of whom haven't been able to look for jobs in earnest because they are handling other immediate needs.

Malone, the cook from New Orleans, skipped all the formally established channels and found work on his own.

"I just had to sit and think about what I had to do first, what I had to do second, what I had to do third," he said.

Malone and his 10 family members, including a stepmother and siblings, dispersed among relatives in Detroit when they arrived last week. He and his young family landed at their cousin Belinda Baptiste's west-side home.

Within days, Baptiste had helped him acquire a driver's license. The two bought a car from a used-car lot. The business owner slashed the price by a third and bought Malone his plates. They found a place to rent where the owner waived the security deposit and two months' rent.

Then, Malone was off to find a job.

After taking a few tests, the manager at Outback offered him a job as a line cook. His offer in hand, Malone walked out of the Outback with a twinkle in his eye.

"I didn't know he even had teeth; I hadn't seen him smile since he got here," Baptiste said.

Then he disappeared.

"We were all worried about him," said Baptiste. "You know where he was? He was driving back and forth from home to work ... making sure he'd know how to get to work."

Contact MARGARITA BAUZA at 313-222-6823 or bauza@freepress.com.

Looking for work? There's help available

■ Whether you're an evacuee seeking employment or an employer with jobs to offer, the Ramada Inn in Southfield wants to hear from you. The hotel is assembling a workroom where employers can interview hurricane evacuees. The hotel also is taking donations for office supplies, furniture and interview clothes. Volunteers are needed to help write resumes. For information, call volunteer Licia Harper at 313-715-2625.

■ A U.S. Department of Labor site links evacuees looking for work and employers looking to hire in all parts of the country. The Web site also offers job information for those who would like to participate in the rebuilding of the Gulf area. The Web site can be found through www.michigan.gov or at www.jobsearch.org/katrinajobs.

■ Michigan's Department of Human Services is helping process evacuees in need of identification and paperwork required to obtain jobs in Michigan. Call 517-373-2035.

■ The Department of Human Services is referring evacuees to local Michigan Works! agencies located throughout the state. For general information, contact Michigan Works! at 800-285-9675.

N. Michigan takes in 30 from Katrina

Red Cross working with area agencies to house evacuees

By ERICA KOLASKI
Tribune Staff Writer

CHEBOYGAN - The local chapter of the American Red Cross has opened 14 disaster relief cases as of Friday, according to officials.

Betsy Hanson, executive director of the American Red Cross of Northern Lower Michigan, whose coverage area includes Cheboygan County, said that 30 people have moved into Northern Michigan communities after Hurricane Katrina.

"These individuals are arriving daily and using their own modes of transportation to move to our communities," said Hanson. "We are working with numerous local agencies and community groups to provide shelter, food, clothing and medical assistance to the victims of Hurricane Katrina."

Hanson said that nationally, the American Red Cross has housed 207,000 survivors, provided more than 1.9 million overnight stays, in more than 709 shelters in 24 states and the District of Columbia. None of the shelters are in Michigan, as the victims are being quickly placed in better housing.

"I am very pleased with the response from our communities. Statewide, our chapters have welcomed 3,370 new volunteers who are undergoing disaster response training now. In our chapter, 72 individuals have joined our ranks," she said.

"The work ahead is daunting, but we will persist. This is not a sprint but a full length marathon," Hanson said. "For us to do our work, local chapters need support. I encourage people to remember to support the general operations of their local chapter of the Red Cross as well as the ongoing National Disaster Relief fund."

She explained that the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund enables the Red Cross to provide shelter, food, counseling and other assistance to those in need for this disaster and thousands of other disasters across the country each year.

Those who would like to contribute can make a financial gift either online at www.redcross.org or by calling 1-800-HELP-NOW. Residents can also contact the Chapter, located in Petoskey. Checks payable to the American Red Cross Northern Lower Michigan should be mailed to: PO Box 2478, Petoskey, MI 49770.

A long way from home Katrina survivors find themselves in Ann Arbor

Tuesday, September 20, 2005

BY JOHN MULCAHY
Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

Lan Graves sent her daughter, Serena Le, 15, out of New Orleans with friends the Saturday before Hurricane Katrina hit.

Graves herself could not go, and by Sunday, lack of a sturdy car forced her to stay and take refuge in a historic building in the French Quarter.

Another New Orleans resident, Juan Toledano, fled for Houston the day before Katrina hit, then tried to return to get his immigration papers. Toledano wound up sleeping in his car, then in a youth center in Gramercy, La., then tried to walk back to New Orleans.

On Labor Day, after a week of being driven from their homes by the storm, Graves and Toledano were two of many people who made their way to the New Orleans airport. Without knowing where they were going, they were among those put on a plane by federal officials, who sent them to Battle Creek to stay at Fort Custer.

Graves and Toledano stayed at the evacuee center there until late last week, when they came to Ann Arbor.

Once she arrived in Michigan, Graves was able to re-establish contact with her daughter, who was with friends in New Iberia, La., and on Sunday they were reunited as part of the local relief effort coordinated by Jewish Family Services in Ann Arbor.

Graves, Le and Toledano now have apartments donated by McKinley, a real estate, investment and management firm with apartment buildings throughout the area.

Graves and Toledano, who didn't know each other before they shared the evacuation ordeal, were among the first five federal evacuees from the hurricane zone to arrive in Ann Arbor. (More than 200 others, most of whom made their own way to the area, have been helped so far by the American Red Cross Washtenaw County Chapter.)

The former New Orleans residents have lost all their possessions to the flood waters, and are essentially starting over.

"Right now, the only thing I care about is my daughter's education," said Graves, who worked in data coordination and evaluation in the Louisiana Public Health Institute.

Le is scheduled to be enrolled in Pioneer High School today.

The decision to separate from her daughter as the hurricane approached was not easy, Graves said, but she felt her daughter would be OK because she is young. When Graves realized that her car would not get her out of New Orleans, she took refuge the day before the storm with several people in the Jackson Brewery building in the French Quarter, where she sometimes helped a friend who had a store there.

During the storm, the wind howled, windows broke, the lights went out. People did not talk, Graves said. "We just looked at people's faces and (they were) so scared," she said.

While the area where she was staying did not flood, in the days after the hurricane she heard about the flooding and looters. She heard gunshots on the street and people screaming. Her group

did not run out of food or water. She tried to get to her car and office, where she had some papers and money, but floodwaters up to her waist stopped her.

As she waited in New Iberia after the hurricane hit, Le said, she tried to call her mother, but could not get through.

"I was worried not knowing if she made it out," said Le. "We were looking at the news, and, gosh, it was just horrible."

Graves' emotions surface as she talks about being reunited with her daughter and of her gratefulness for the help she has received.

"I was so excited," she said of the reunion. "We lost everything and still got help from other people. It makes me feel like I'm not lonely and people still love me and help me."

Jewish Family Services is providing help in many ways, including social workers. One example of meeting the evacuees' needs involved finding a laptop computer so that Le has one when she goes to Pioneer High, said Anya Abramzon, executive director of Jewish Family Services.

For Toledano, the story started the day before the storm, as he was getting ready for work, when a friend who was packing to leave told him to check the news on television. Toledano initially planned to stay, but then he decided at the last minute to leave with his friend. They made their way toward Texas on crowded roads and reached Houston by Monday morning, when Katrina hit land.

When they heard, incorrectly, that the damage to New Orleans was not too bad, they headed back. Then they learned they couldn't return. They spent one night sleeping in their car at a gas station. A local minister gave them some food and water, and let them take a shower at his home. They stayed in a local youth center until Labor Day, when Toledano tried to return to his home to pick up some all-important immigration papers. He started driving there but his car broke down and he had to start walking. A friendly stranger picked him up and took him to the airport, where he was told he would be put on the next plane, which came to Battle Creek.

"The whole experience has been traumatic," said Toledano, who immigrated in 1979 to the United States from Cuba, where he had experienced hurricanes as a youth. After seeing the images of desperate people on television, "it could have been me," he said.

A diesel mechanic, Toledano thinks he may return to Louisiana soon for his job, but the future is still uncertain. "If I can't find a job here, I'll find a job somewhere else," he said.

Graves, who came to the United States in 1998 from China, said she might like to return to New Orleans. "We'd love to be back to New Orleans, but we don't know how the future is going on," she said.

John Mulcahy can be reached at jmulcahy@annarbornews.com or (734) 994-6858.

Michigan hoedown steps up evacuees' spirits

■ A good old barbecue, Oakland County-style, serves hospitality for displaced Southerners.

BY BRAD HEATH
The Detroit News

SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP — Michigan served up its hospitality Saturday at a northern Oakland County ranch: men in cowboy hats heaped plates with beans and barbecued chicken and served them to a family tossed halfway across the country by Hurricane Katrina.

The guests, about 30 in all, showed up Saturday for the unusual welcome to Metro Detroit.

"Everybody's been wonderful to us," said JoAnn Davis, who evacuated New Orleans with her family, as she tried to keep her son's attention on the plate of food in front of him. So far, state social services offi-



Velvet S. McNeil / The Detroit News

Jazzy Paige, 10, an evacuee, dances with Lady Russell of Detroit on Saturday at the Double OO ranch in Oakland County.

cials estimate that Michigan has taken in more than 2,000 people displaced by the hurricane and the flooding that followed it, though they said a precise count is impos-

sible. Evacuees arrived on airplanes and in buses, bound for hotels, homes and military bases.

After two weeks in Detroit, Davis' family still lives in a hotel, and

is looking for houses for rent and transportation. They've been together since they evacuated from New Orleans, no small feat considering the thousands of families that were splintered in the chaos of emptying the waterlogged city.

"People have been nice. The only thing we really need now is houses and transportation," said Rocksander Favorite.

Tim Mackie, president of the Double OO Riders Association, which put on the event, grew up in New Orleans. Images of the people left stranded convinced him he needed to do something, he said.

"Watching this on the TV has been really tough," Mackie said. "A lot of my family's been displaced, too, but I don't know where they all are or what they're all doing."

You can reach Brad Heath at (313) 222-2563 or bheath@detnews.com.

Contact us: Gary Miles, Metro Editor Phone: (313) 222-2594 Fax: (313) 222-2335 E-mail: giles@detnews.com Mail: 615 W. L

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Agencies update needs for area evacuees

LANSING STATE JOURNAL

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How to help

- ▶ American Red Cross: www.redcross.org or (800) HELP-NOW (435-7669).
- ▶ Salvation Army: www.salvationarmyusa.org or call (800) SAL-ARMY (725-2769).
- ▶ The Humane Society of the United States: www.hsus.org or (888) 259-5431

Local efforts

Many agencies, businesses and organizations — too many to list — are acting as collection sites for donated items and money. Here's a sampling of local fundraisers and requests for help:

Collection and distribution

- ▶ St. Vincent Catholic Charities, which is

KATRINA AFTERMATH:



Mid-Michigan responds

spearheading the relocation efforts locally, needs the following items: small appliances; cleaning supplies; kitchen supplies; hygiene products; and tables, chairs, living room furniture, and double beds. No more toys are needed. To donate items, or to offer jobs or housing for evacuees call 323-4734. Items also may be taken to the agency, 2800 W. Willow St. in Lansing from 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. weekdays.

- ▶ Katrina Response Distribution Center, 6301 Lansing Road, is collecting the following new items: paper products,

cots/air mattresses, bottled water, linens, baby care products, toiletries, laundry and dish soap, pillows, socks, T-shirts and underwear. No used items. Hours: 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays; 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays. Info: 322-0006 or reliefcenter@comcast.net.

For evacuees

- ▶ To volunteer for the adopt-a-family program, which will link evacuees to residents who can help them settle in the area: Central United Methodist Church, 485-9477.
- ▶ To donate to a response fund for evacuees' needs in Lansing set up by the Capital Area United Way: 337-8211.

Fundraisers

The following events will raise money for evacuees in Lansing, the American Red Cross or other hurricane relief efforts:

- ▶ Charlie's Bar and Grill in Perry will hold a poker tournament and pig roast at 1 p.m. today. It's \$20 to buy-in for Texas Hold 'Em. Info: John, 667-0047.
- ▶ "On One Accord—Uniting to Provide" is a benefit concert hosted by Mizz Reality and Faith United Methodist Church, 6:30 p.m. Oct. 1, at the church, 4301 S. Waverly Road. Free-will offering, personal care items, air mattresses and cots will be accepted. Info: 719-8336.
- ▶ Lansing Tennis Classic will be held from Oct. 7 to Oct. 9 at Everett High School. Entry fee is \$20 for singles, \$15 per person for doubles. Registration and info: Brian Sullivan, 290-5322.

Send us your plans

- ▶ Contact Lansing State Journal at 377-1112 or metro@lsj.com, or fax information to 377-1298.

EDITORIAL: The house of caged children

Date: Monday, September 19, 2005

Source: Plain Dealer (Cleveland)

State and local child-welfare officials are trying to decide what went wrong, now that authorities have discovered that a Huron County couple forced eight of their 11 adopted special-needs children to sleep in cages.

Michael and Sharen Gravelle have not been charged, but they face tough questions. So does the Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services and other agencies that placed youngsters in their care.

Did some adoption agencies, eager to find homes for children, rush to judgment in favor of the Gravelles? Were the Gravelles just a loving couple overwhelmed by caring for their youngsters? Or did they adopt so they could collect monthly checks from Social Security and adoption services?

And what does this troubling case say about the training of social workers? At least one said she saw the enclosures, and they didn't trouble her at all. Yet social workers are mandated to report suspected abuses to the authorities.

As for the Gravelles' lawyer's defense that the enclosures were a safety measure "that's just preposterous. Children with HIV or Down syndrome are children, not zoo animals. Jim McCafferty, in charge of Cuyahoga's child-welfare office, says he is reviewing adoption procedures in light of the case. More agencies must be willing to undergo that unnerving scrutiny.

The Gravelles adopted abandoned children from across Ohio and made their home in a rural county. Thus, few agencies knew how many youngsters the Gravelles had taken in or how they were being treated.

Getting detailed answers to such questions shouldn't take another layer of bureaucracy. Social workers who focus on getting kids adopted and keeping them safe long after the agency's direct involvement has ended will be sufficient. Especially when the kids have trouble looking out for themselves.

Children 'ending up everywhere'; Thousands scattered, making reunions tough

Date: Tuesday, September 20, 2005

Source: *Chicago Tribune*

Author: *Deborah Horan and Ray Quintanilla*

DATELINE: HOUSTON

A 17-month-old girl in the custody of Texas authorities has been separated from her mother for more than a week. No one has stepped forward to claim the child.

Separations such as this are common across the South as rolls of the missing swell to record levels because of Hurricane Katrina.

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, an Alexandria, Va.-based group that is leading efforts to reunite families separated during the storm, has opened 3,276 cases of children who are either lost or have been reported separated from parents or legal guardians. Most are from Louisiana.

As of Monday, 883, or about one in four, had been solved.

In addition, the center has received 8,767 reports of adults who are missing, the group said. The Justice Department asked the center to help find missing adults too. Those cases have been referred to the Phoenix-based National Center for Missing Adults.

In the past two weeks, the children's agency's hot line has received 14,421 calls, including 126 reporting abandoned children. The majority of the reports originated in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

For a single disaster, "these are the largest numbers we have ever had," said Nancy McBride, national safety director for the center. "It's just been an overwhelming job to find missing or lost children and get them back with their families."

Making the job more difficult is that evacuees were taken to emergency shelters in 23 states in the days after the hurricane.

About 20 former law-enforcement officers in the disaster area are following up on reports of missing children, obtaining photographs of the children and gathering information to post on the national center's Web site. The non-profit group also is comparing notes with social service groups, law-enforcement agencies and emergency shelters to reunite families.

"The children are ending up everywhere," said Gwen Carter, spokeswoman for the Texas Child Protection Services.

Despite the large numbers of missing people, stories of remarkable good fortune have emerged from far-flung places that opened emergency shelters for evacuees.

On Friday, Texas Child Protection Services flew Raychelle White, 12, to the Reliant Center in Houston, where she was reunited with her mother, Michelle. The girl's mother had been evacuated to Houston after the storm. The daughter, officials said, was taken to a shelter in Oklahoma City.

In another case, Nino Green, 11, was walking along a dusty street at Camp Williams in Utah the week after Katrina when he looked up and saw a familiar face: his grandfather, who lived a few blocks away in New Orleans.

Joseph Williams Jr., 67, had spent 3 1/2 days at the New Orleans' Convention Center before he was evacuated to the airport and put on a flight headed west. Nino went to a friend's house before the storm, leaving his mother and three sisters at home in the 9th Ward. "A storm usually don't come, so I didn't worry," he said.

Stranded at his friend's house, eventually he, too, was evacuated to the airport and put on a plane headed west--to Salt Lake City.

"I felt alone because I ain't got no family," the boy said.

Once he found his grandfather, the man didn't let the boy out of his sight for the next three days. Neither knew where Nino's mother, Nina Green, and his three sisters had gone--or even if they were alive. No one talked about it around the boy, who seemed happy to go for a walk in the mountains--he got lost wandering away from the group--and to try a rock-climbing exercise at a National Guard training camp.

Then another piece of luck came Nino's way.

After hearing the boy and his grandfather being interviewed on a Utah radio station, an enterprising listener went on the Internet and found a mention of New Orleans evacuee Nina Green in The Arizona Republic. The radio station's staff worked the phones, found Nina and arranged for her to talk to Nino. Mother and son had found each other.

Nino was flown to Arizona. Where the boy, his three sisters, and their mom have settled since is unknown.

Where to get help

The Web site for the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children is www.missingkids.com. Also, the American Red Cross has established a hot line to help reunite families after Katrina: 1-877-loved1s. The agency's Web site is www.redcross.org.

Thousands of children remain missing after Hurricane Katrina

Date: Monday, September 19, 2005

Source: Fort Worth Star-Telegram (Texas)

Author: Deanna Boyd

BATON ROUGE, La. -- It was a last-minute decision that Laila Brown now regrets. The 34-year-old woman had planned to take her youngest daughter, 6-year-old Dion Rochelle Ridley, with her to the New Orleans Convention Center to ride out Hurricane Katrina. But when she called the girl's nanny the night of Aug. 28, Dion was already tucked in bed asleep. Believing that the approaching storm was not really a big threat, Brown agreed to let her daughter stay one more night.

"If I would have known it would have been this bad, I wouldn't have ever left my baby," Brown said. "I know Ms. Beatrice is a good woman and that she's going to take good care of my baby, but I'm worried now because I haven't talked to them in three weeks."

She's not alone.

More than 2,000 children from Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama are still missing or separated from at least one parent or other caregiver, according to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which is maintaining a database of the missing.

"Each of us who have children know what it's like to lose your child for a minute in a department store, so we can imagine what these families are feeling and what they're thinking if they've been separated from their children for the last week or so," first lady Laura Bush said during a visit to the center's Alexandria, Va., headquarters on Friday.

More than 750 children from Louisiana have been reunited with their families. Fifty had been placed in foster care, but the vast majority of those separated are believed to be with relatives or family friends, scattered across the country, unable to reach parents such as Brown.

More than 13,000 calls have been fielded through the Katrina Missing Persons Hotline. More than 5,000 calls have been received by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Photographs of dozens of missing children are posted on the nonprofit organization's Web site, www.missingkids.com.

Also pictured are children who have been found safe, mostly in shelters, but who are still looking for their parents or caregivers.

Information on some children can be sparse. Some are listed by only their first names. Other photographs are simply titled "unknown female" or "unknown male."

"If you have a very young child, many may not be able to say their name or tell you who they are, and that's an obstacle," said Nancy McBride, the center's national safety director. "You've also got children who may be shy or too frightened and may not be able to talk to somebody right away."

On the second floor of the River Center in Baton Rouge, La., half a dozen retired law enforcement officers scour shelter resident lists and the approximately 20 missing-person Web sites created since the hurricane, looking for separated children or their parents.

"We've found kids here in Baton Rouge, and we've found their parents as far away as Texas, Michigan and one in Georgia," said Lee Teitsworth, a retired FBI agent and member of Team Adam, a volunteer program of the national center, which usually assists in kidnapping case. "It's just not shelter to shelter. Sometimes the parents are with relatives in another state."

Some of the children became separated from their parents during rescue efforts.

"The Coast Guard helicopters took them out and maybe dropped them off in different locations," Teitsworth said. "You can't blame them, because their main mission was saving lives."

One young girl told national center workers that she was in her bedroom one minute, and the next, clinging to her mattress as it floated in rising floodwaters.

"You had absolute harrowing, dire circumstances where it's very easy for me to see how kids were separated, because they were just trying to get out," McBride said.

Other children rode out the storm and flooding with their parents, only to become separated during the evacuation.

"We've got scenarios in which parents were making actual gut-wrenching decisions to hand their child up to the front of a line of transport to get them safe," McBride said. "Parents performed heroic acts to try and keep their children safe, sometimes to the detriment of their own safety." Most of the children didn't end up alone, but in the care of older siblings, other relatives, friends or neighbors.

Some 2,000 children who were in foster care when the hurricane hit lived in areas affected by the storm and flooding. Three-fourths have been located.

Marketa Garner Gautreau with the Louisiana Department of Social Services expects that the majority of the 500 still unaccounted for may be in the greater Covington area, where a count has not yet taken place because staff members there cannot be reached.

McBride said agencies will continue to work to find and unite all the missing children, "until we resolve every case."

Sometimes there are happy endings.

On Sunday, 22 days after James Bailey last laid eyes on his son, Alex Davis, he got the phone call he had been desperately praying for.

Alex, 8, was safe and with his mother at the Baton Rouge home of one of her relatives. The boy's maternal aunt had spotted his picture on CNN and alerted the national center that the child was fine.

Within 15 minutes of hearing the news, Bailey was talking to his son on the phone.

"His first words were 'How's my games?' " said Bailey, laughing for the first time in weeks.

But others, like Brown, are still waiting.

A photograph of Dion -- dressed in pink with her hair in braids and a toothless smile on her face -- has been posted on the national center's Web site. Brown's sister has done radio interviews pleading for information about the girl. Every time the phone rings, Brown's heart leaps.

"That's my baby and I miss her, and I know she's probably looking for me too," she said.

Michigan Report

September 19, 2005

BUDGET'S PASSAGE TARGETED FOR THIS WEEK

The pace by which lawmakers are moving the budget conference reports means the 2005-06 budget could appear on Governor Jennifer Granholm's desk by Friday.

So far, the Senate has approved three of its conference reports – for the Judiciary, and the departments of History, Arts and Libraries and Military and Veteran's Affairs – while conference reports for a number of other budgets have been signed.

The House will pass just one budget bill for most the budgets (the K-12 School Aid budget will be in a separate bill) but several of the budgets as part of that omnibus bill, HB 4831, have also been approved in conference committees.

Matt Resch, spokesperson for House Speaker Craig DeRoche (R-Novi), said officials hope to complete legislative action on the budget Thursday.

There are still tough decisions remaining on budgets, said Ari Adler, spokesperson for Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema (R-Wyoming), since the conference committees were left free to make a number of decisions on policies and programs so long as they met the budget targets set for the departments.

Greg Bird, spokesperson for the State Budget Office, said the budget was built on compromises and that compromises would have to yet be found.

Among the budgets that still need resolution is the State Police budget, SB 280, where efforts to keep open some or all of the three State Police posts Ms. Granholm called for closure (Indian River, Grand Haven and Groveland) has kept lawmakers from reaching a final agreement.

Because so many compromises have been made, both Mr. Adler and Mr. Bird said Republicans and Democrats both can claim victories in the budget. Both, for example, said boosting the per pupil allowance in the school aid budget was an accomplishment both parties could claim.

Mr. Adler said Senate Republicans claimed as victory that no tax changes or fee increases were included in the budget and that some reforms in Medicaid, requiring healthier lifestyles by recipients, will be included.

Mr. Bird said the administration is pleased some of the more controversial measures cutting off Medicaid access in some cases and cutting cash grants to some recipients were blocked. Those cuts could have been “devastating” to many poorer families, he said.

In addition, Mr. Bird said changes were made to proposed cuts to the budgets of Wayne State University and Northern Michigan University.

Jack McHugh of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy said in one critical way the budget for 2005-06 is far better than budgets adopted in recent years: it has no major tax or fee changes included in it.

He said the organization was also encouraged that some portions of the House’s plan to set a formula for higher education spending remained in the budget.

Mr. McHugh said the “price of government” process in the budget at least changed some of the dynamics of the budgetary discussions. He said the Senate and House “could have made beautiful music together” when working on the budget, but when the process got into conference “sausage” was made.

But the group was disappointed that some of the proposals from Sen. Tom George (R-Portage) to dramatically change Medicaid by encouraging lifestyle changes are “essentially gutted.” Medicaid “in its current form is unsustainable,” and there were proposals, especially from Mr. George, to change that system but they have been largely left out of the budget.

Mr. McHugh was unimpressed that lawmakers were supposed to report in January on new proposals to cut Medicaid spending, an agreement reached as part of the budget. “They can do that at any time,” he said.

He was also disappointed that House proposals to cut welfare spending in the Department of Human Services budget were effectively “gutted.”

With the prospect likely that Ms. Granholm will veto spending for the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility in Baldwin, Mr. McHugh said studies have indicated not having a private prison means costs at public prisons go up. He said he wasn’t arguing for the Baldwin prison, but that the state should have some private prison facilities.

A spokesperson for The GEO Group, which owns the Baldwin facility, said if Ms. Granholm does veto operations for the prison then officials in Lake County are worried that local services will be “decimated.”

The prison, with 229 employees, is the largest employer in Lake County.

With three budgets already passed by the Senate – and four more, DHS, Agriculture, General Government and Transportation – slated for votes on Tuesday, officials expect Ms. Granholm will get budgets to her desk yet this week.

In addition, four budget conference committees are set to meet on Tuesday, though several are just to sign the final conference report, for DHS (SB 271) and the Department of Labor and Economic Growth (SB 276). School aid (HB 4887) and the omnibus budget bill (HB 4831) are also scheduled to meet at 9 a.m. Tuesday.

But no meeting has been scheduled yet for action on the State Police budget (SB 280). That budget may prove to be one of the most contentious to complete because officials are trying to find a way to keep open one or all of the State Police posts slated to close: Groveland in Oakland County, Iron River and Grand Haven. Most of the pressure is being put on keeping open the Groveland facility.

Tom Clay of the Citizens Research Council of Michigan said the budget includes spending reductions, but without affecting the most important issues on each side. Mr. Clay said he is suspicious about whether officials underestimated Medicaid costs to get the budget balanced only to then need a supplemental appropriation in a few months.

“That’s been a fairly standard approach taken the last couple years,” he said.

Mr. Clay said he estimates the budget requires \$230 million in one-time revenue, an amount he said is far less than in recent budgets.

An analysis by the Senate Fiscal Agency indicates the use of \$274.7 million in revenues from sources other than regular ongoing revenues.

9118 LSJ 12A

Workers forgotten

A Sept. 10 LSJ article on the state budget quoted Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema and House Speaker Craig DeRoche as saying, "the budget deal shows that state government can live within its means."

Not really.

Not when state employees are entering their third year of wage cuts. Despite funding for Merit Awards and laptops for sixth-graders, there's still not enough to resume employees' regular pay.

Despite the 38 percent pay increase legislators gave themselves, they have not seen fit to restore wages to civil servants during this time of high gasoline and heating fuels.

Seems the workers have been forgotten.

LJ Seman
Lansing

Albion police officer charged with sex crimes fired from job

Trace Christenson
The Enquirer

ALBION — An Albion police officer, charged with sex crimes, has been fired from the department.

Kyle Chaney, 39, was fired Sept. 8, Chief Eric Miller confirmed Monday.

Miller said Chaney lost his job after an internal investigation was completed. Miller would not comment further.

Chaney worked for the Albion Department of Public Safety for 14 years and was its 2005 Officer of the Year.

He is awaiting trial on four charges of producing sexually abusive material, possession of child sexually abusive material, accosting a child for immoral purposes and second-degree child abuse. Chaney was charged in August after Calhoun County sheriff department investigators alleged he was taking explicit photographs of a 16-year-old girl.

The day before he was fired, Chaney waived his preliminary examination in Calhoun County District Court and the case was sent to circuit court for trial.

But Assistant Kalamazoo County Prosecutor Chris Johnson, appointed as special prosecutor to handle the case, and Defense Attorney Mark Webb announced then that plea negotiations were under way.

Although Chaney faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted of all four charges, the lawyers said he has been offered a deal to enter a plea to one count of producing child sexually explicit material and a misdemeanor of contributing to the delinquency of a minor. If he does, Chaney would be placed on probation for five years and could serve time in jail but not prison.

He remains in the Barry County jail with bond set at \$500,000.

Trace Christenson covers crime and courts. He can be reached at 966-0685 or tchrist@battlecr.gannett.com.

Originally published September 20, 2005

Woman gets jail sentence in sexual assault

Male teen rape victim hopes to get custody of son

Tuesday, September 20, 2005

By Crystal Harmon
TIMES WRITER

Clad in an pastel shirt and dress pants, the 16-year-old Bay City boy looked as though he were headed to a high school dance.

But there was no joy awaiting him beyond the courthouse doors Monday, and little satisfaction in seeing the woman who confessed to sexually assaulting him two years ago get sentenced to 360 days in jail.

No joy, because the teen - The Times does not identify sexual assault victims - is being kept from the role of full-time father to the son born of the assault.

"He's just so awesome," the teenager said proudly of the 15-month-old child, conceived when he and 25-year-old Amy Dyjak - his father's fiance - had sexual intercourse more than two years ago.

Dyjak, of Bay City, originally was charged with four counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct, three counts of second-degree criminal sexual conduct and three counts of delivery of marijuana. She was allowed to plead no contest to one count of second-degree criminal sexual conduct and the other felonies were dismissed.

Bay County Circuit Judge Kenneth W. Schmidt sentenced Dyjak as she sat in an orange jumpsuit and shackles on Monday.

Schmidt ordered her to have no contact with the baby once released from jail in 76 days. Dyjak has been serving time since her arrest in December and was given credit for 284 days served. A probate judge terminated Dyjak's parental rights earlier this month.

But her teen victim and his mother, a 34-year-old woman who's still married to the victim's father - Dyjak's fiance - say they supported the plea bargain only because prosecutors told them they would gain custody of the baby.

The toddler's legal father, at least for now, is the victim's father, who has stood by Dyjak throughout the ordeal and has taken the baby to visit Dyjak in jail, according to the victim and his mother.

The Times could not reach the victim's father for comment.

The victim's father was living with Dyjak at 1501 Center Ave., when Dyjak, according to the victim, got the 14-year-old boy drunk and high on marijuana and had sex with him on several occasions in September 2003.

The victim's mother said she wants her son, a high school sophomore, to gain custody of the child he fathered, and she's willing to help him raise the toddler.

The teen victim is seeking custody and has a hearing in Bay County Probate Court next month. Bay County Prosecutor Joseph K. Sheeran, unavailable for comment Monday or today, has said he would support the boy being granted parental rights.

The victim's mother said her husband and Dyjak lured her son, who at the time was in the eighth grade, into "their perverted love triangle."

Although Dyjak declined an opportunity to address the court on Monday, the victim's mother read a statement to the judge, deploring what she deemed a light sentence.

"She will only serve one year in a local jail for her crime: soft punishment for rape by any standards," the mother said. "Dyjak put her own momentary desires to have a child before everything, including the well-being of a child living in her home as a son."

Dyjak's fiance had a vasectomy years before the baby was born, the victim's mother said after the court hearing on Monday, and should have known the child was not his.

The teen victim said he knew it was his son, and not his little brother, from the moment he first saw the baby. DNA tests since have confirmed that suspicion.

But the victim's father signed an affidavit of parenthood when the baby was born in June 2004.

The victim's mother said it was only after Dyjak and her fiance got into an argument that Dyjak revealed the truth about the baby's paternity.

"Then (the fiance) came over here like a jealous boyfriend" rather than a concerned father, the victim's mother said. Despite the trauma surrounding her grandson's birth, the victim's mother said she and her son love him dearly and want to raise him.

"Is there anyone here who would like to go through life explaining this kind of personal family history?" she asked in the courtroom. "Children who are the product of rape carry a special burden that can cause lifelong pain.....(but) my son has pledged to love and protect his baby and give him the family support and protection every child deserves. I will be there to help."

The victim and his mother both contend that the criminal justice system has separate standards for female and male victims of sex crimes.

"If the victim in this case were a 13-year-old girl, I believe this crime would be taken much more seriously and the punishment would be much more severe," the victim's mother said. "There would be no question about the victim's right to parent their own child."

Upon her release from the Bay County Jail, Dyjak will undergo sex offender counseling and substance abuse counseling, as ordered by the judge. She will also be required to register as a sex offender.

Crystal Harmon is a staff writer for The Times. She can be reached at 894-9643 or by e-mail at charmon@bc-times.com.

Abduction try reported

Tuesday, September 20, 2005

The Grand Rapids Press

MONTCALM COUNTY –

Sheriff's deputies were investigating an attempted abduction after a 5-year-old girl claimed she was approached by two men and ordered into their vehicle while she waited for a school bus Monday at the Greenbriar Mobile Home Park along M-91. The girl did not get in the vehicle, she told police. She ran home after the 8 a.m. incident, and police were unsure where the men went. Authorities say the men were in a small red and black four-door vehicle. Call police at (989) 831-5253.

IN A MINUTE

Lawmakers back effort to tighten sex-offender rules

Michigan's congressional delegation supported a measure last week that would make child sex offenders face stringent monitoring requirements and new mandatory penalties.

The state's House delegation voted with the majority to pass the Children's Safety Act

on Wednesday.

The act creates a national Web site for child sex offenders and mandates that sex felons face up to 20 years in prison for failing to comply with registration requirements.

The sex-offender bill also requires felony offenders to register for life and authorizes the death penalty for sex crimes that result in the killing of a child.

"With passage of this important child-protection legislation, America's children will be safer in their homes, backyards, schools and neighborhoods," said Rep. Fred Upton, R-St. Joseph.

By the Associated Press

Published September 20, 2005
[From the Lansing State Journal]

Woman in Mason lied to get aid, police say

Professed victim of Katrina jailed on fraud charge

By Christine Rook
Lansing State Journal

MASON - Police on Monday led Kim Horn from the back door of her new home, her hands cuffed behind her back.

The woman who had told the Mason community she lost almost everything to Hurricane Katrina now stands accused of duping the very city where she grew up.

A police officer helped her into the back seat of a marked Ford Explorer.

She ignored a reporter's question, simply smiled at the officer and said in a quiet voice:

"You can close the door."

The door slammed shut, and the Explorer headed to Ingham County Jail, where Horn, 42, was arraigned and bond set at \$25,000.

The charge: felony larceny under false pretenses, which carries a prison term of up to five years. As difficult as it may be to accept, scams are often part of the aftermath of a major disaster. After the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks, there were numerous reports of people grabbing for handfuls of the free aid that came flowing in.

For example, this past year, a woman in Grand Rapids was sentenced to 10 months in jail for wrongly accepting more than \$90,000 in aid meant for 9/11 victim families.

Whether Horn will be cleared of her charge remains to be seen. A pretrial hearing is set for Sept. 29.

Community gifts

Horn and her 6-year-old daughter Tessa hadn't even spent a week in the house that was partially a gift from the community.

The rent had been reduced to \$500 per month, and the first month was free. It came almost fully furnished through donations: dishes, furniture, towels, linens, a washer and dryer. There was even a bicycle for Tessa, a DVD player and a television.

But on Thursday, after a profile about Horn appeared in the Lansing State Journal, accusations bubbled up that her story was a scam.

If it was a scam, then city officials and St. Vincent Catholic Charities had also been tricked.

Horn told people her new house in a place called Kenner outside New Orleans had been swept away by the storm and that the family's vehicle had been spotted two miles away. She, her husband, their two children and their dog had fled north just ahead of the devastation. Her husband and son remain in Louisiana, she has said. They could not be reached for comment. Details of the story, however didn't add up for officials.

"When things started smelling some," city police Chief John Stressman said, "we decided to follow the odor."

Far from Katrina

Police say that although Horn did live in Louisiana, she didn't live even close to Kenner or any area touched by the hurricane-force winds.

When asked if she bought a house in Kenner, Mason Detective Lynne Mark said, "No."

Mark delivered the arrest warrant to Horn.

In fact, Mark said Horn didn't have any property there. She has a house in Leesville, police say, which is unmarred by the storm.

Horn, who had graduated from Mason High School and was considered one of the city's own, had already made friends with the neighbors on her street.

"I still feel for the woman," said Marie Wingo, who lives across the street and helped organize some of the donations for Horn.

So many people in Mason had come together to help Horn.

"My child gave her daughter a toy," Mayor Robin Naeyaert said.

As for Tessa, she appeared blissfully oblivious to Monday's proceedings. Detective Mark led the girl and her tiny dog out of the house early so she did not have to see police handcuff her mother.

"We're just getting out of eyeshot here," Mark said, leading the girl to the next lot. They were eventually released to the custody of a family member.

"I'm convinced 99 percent of the population are doing the right things for the right reasons,"

Mark said, affirming that the day's events hadn't shaken his faith in people. "There are true and honest victims out there who still need our support."

Contact Christine Rook at 377-1261 or clrook@lsj.com.

Woman poured burning oil on husband

Tuesday, September 20, 2005

By John Agar

MUSKEGON CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

Upset over financial troubles and her husband's relationships with other women, My-Hanh Thi Nguyen poured boiling cooking oil over him -- including his head -- while he slept on a couch, witnesses told Kent County Sheriff's Department deputies.

"Upon arrival, deputies found victim Nhan (Van) Mai in the hallway with burns from his head to his feet," investigators wrote in an affidavit.

Mai, 49, was in critical condition Monday at the burn unit at Spectrum Health Blodgett, and Detective E. J. Johnson said his prognosis was uncertain.

On Monday, the Mai's 49-year-old wife was arraigned by 63rd District Judge Sara Smolenski on charges of assault with intent to murder, a potential life offense, and assault with intent to cause great bodily harm, a 10-year felony.

The judge ordered her held on \$250,000 bond pending an Oct. 3 probable-cause hearing.

"Can you reduce it? I don't have much money," Nguyen pleaded via video link from the Kent County Jail.

The judge said no, the allegations were too serious.

Nguyen, who came here from Vietnam in 1987, said she had no previous criminal record. She asked for a translator for Monday's hearing, but the judge said she appeared to understand English. A translator will be available at future hearings.

Nguyen has worked as a cook in the main kitchen of the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel since 1996, she said. Her husband worked in a Herman Miller factory until June, the company said.

Two daughters, a son-in-law and granddaughter lived with the couple at 1445 Silver Springs Court SE in the Crystal Springs neighborhood.

Police said the couple had been arguing for days when Nguyen allegedly poured the hot oil on her husband.

She was cooking breakfast around 6:30 a.m. Friday when the incident occurred, police said.

Police said there was no previous history of domestic violence in the home.

Police were called by a family member who reported a "burning complaint," Johnson said in the affidavit.

"Deputies discovered large amounts of cooking oil on the floor and couch area of the home," police said. When Deputy Alan Roetman talked to the suspect a little later, "the suspect acknowledged with a 'yes' gesture that she threw oil on her husband," police said.

"The victim made a brief statement to (rescuers) that he was sleeping when this happened to him. The evidence at the scene showed that the majority of the oil was dumped onto the victim on the couch."

The wife told police that she and her husband "were arguing" while she cooked breakfast.

Police said that a daughter, Bao-Anh Mail, told deputies "that her parents have been fighting lately over financial problems, and her father having girlfriends."

Husband gets life in wife's murder

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, September 20, 2005

By Paul Janczewski pjanczewski@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6333

Robert T. Parks blamed prosecutors, police and the media for conspiring to have him "unjustly" persecuted and convicted of strangling his wife so violently that a tiny bone in her neck snapped. But Judis Andrews, 63, of Phoenix, whose daughter was murdered by Parks, 32, said his reaction wasn't surprising.

"That's always been his style," he said. "Blame everyone else but himself."

Parks, convicted of first-degree murder by a jury that deliberated for 45 minutes, was sentenced to life in prison without parole Monday in the death of Jessica Andrews-Parks, 28.

She was found in her bed Sept. 3, 2004 in the couple's Fenton apartment, and resuscitation efforts by paramedics were unsuccessful.

Parks told people she had overdosed on medications, but changed his story several times.

The cause of death was ruled inconclusive at first, but later tests revealed a broken hyoid bone and broken blood vessels in her left eye, likely signs of manual strangulation.

Andrews, a former prosecuting attorney in Arizona and now a defense attorney with 33 years of experience, said the slaying of his daughter "put a hole in my heart."

Mark Berkman, retired as a Genesee County assistant prosecutor but doing that job now in Oakland County, asked the judge to warn the state Department of Corrections that Parks is a manipulative and deceptive person.

He credited the skill of forensic pathologists for finding a cause of death 11 months after the slaying and Fenton police for pursuing leads and finding a link to Parks.

Witnesses at trial painted Parks as a philandering husband who ran around with strippers and ruled his wife with an iron fist. Police and prosecutors believe he strangled her when she rebelled.

Andrews-Parks was working at a local bank and was preparing to begin teaching English at Davenport University in Flint. Parks had a retail security job with Target.

"We sent her out for an education and received her back in a coffin," Andrews said.

Parks moved to East Chicago, Ind., with the couple's 2-year-old son after the slaying.

Still, during a rambling statement to Genesee Circuit Judge Judith A. Fullerton, Parks proclaimed his innocence and forgave those who "persecuted me unjustly."

He vowed to appeal the case and be "vindicated of this garbage, this nonsense."

In a related matter, Clifton Rhodes Jr., 37, the commander of the East Chicago, Ind., police department and Parks' brother, faces a preliminary examination today for charges related to destroying evidence in his brother's murder case.

Update: Grant to fight domestic abuse

CONTINUED FROM IB *LSJ 9/19/58*

Ingham Co. to continue domestic response team

Ingham County will continue its Domestic Assault Response Team — an effort to hold more domestic violence offenders accountable and prevent cases from stalling in the court system.

A \$398,869 Department of Justice grant will cover a full-time prosecutor, a full-time probation officer and a full-time victims' advocate. The team has been at work for three years. It tracks offenders and offers support to victims, such as attending court hearings with them.

A funding crisis last year had many fearing the team would dissolve this year.

Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunnings III said earlier recently that he is grateful the team can remain in operation.

CHILD SUPPORT DATABASE

Warrants issued for parents behind in support payments

Ingham and Eaton County Friend of the Court offices issued more than 220 bench warrants in AUGUST 2005 against parents behind in child-support payments. Those parents are shown in the following list, part of the State Journal's commitment to publish the names of deadbeat parents on the second Sunday of every month, based on the warrants issued from the previous month. These warrants were active in both counties as of AUGUST 2005. Some parents may have paid some or all of their debt since then. Some names appear more than once because they have more than one support order. The Clinton County Friend of the Court has refused to cooperate with the State Journal's request, saying that publishing such a list would embarrass the children of the parents named.

SEARCH THE LIST OF DEADBEAT PARENTS WITH NEW WARRANTS ISSUED IN AUGUST 2005

► For a searchable database of
the list of bench warrants for
parents in arrears, go to
www.lsj.com.

Telephone woes plague FOC

Tuesday, September 20, 2005

By Brian Wheeler bwheeler@citpat.com -- 768-4928

Jackson's Friend of the Court office opened in a new location today. Just don't bother calling to offer congratulations.

Officials were warning of major phone problems with their office at 1697 Lansing Ave., ones that promise to anger customers who typically call to complain about child support.

Don't call this week, officials say, unless you have to.

"It's definitely going to impact the type of service we're hoping to provide," said Karen Robinson, the agency's assistant director.

Significantly, the office won't be able to take more than six calls to its main number, 788-4470, at a time. Rather than be placed on hold, other callers will get an initial message and then just hear the phone ring.

About 75 to 100 people call the office each hour, Robinson said.

She and Director Andy Crisenbery blame SBC, which provides phone service. They said they learned of the problem last week as the office prepared its move from downtown.

The agency, which collects child support, has been closed since work ended Thursday while employees relocated.

On Monday, officials from SBC and Friend of the Court were working on short-term fixes to the phone system, Robinson said.

An SBC spokeswoman would not comment Monday afternoon as she researched the situation.

The news set off some head-scratching among county commissioners, and they planned to contact the phone company.

"This is going to be a big problem," said Commissioner DeAnn Gumbert, R-Blackman Township, "and we don't want to be there when it happens."

Save custody rights

Can you believe a man or woman serving his or her country in other countries can lose custody rights of their children? Yes, they can!

Rep. Rick Jones, R-Grand Ledge, has introduced House Bill 5100 to protect these brave members of our fighting forces. They cannot lose custody rights under this law.

The Republican and Democrat House and Senate members should get their act together and get this bill passed. Now!

LSS 9/17
JA

Eve R. Ranney
Eaton Rapids

Free clinic open to residents of Roscommon County

By Cheryl Holladay

September 15, 2005

Residents in the counties of Roscommon, Crawford, Oscoda and Montmorency who do not have Medicaid or other insurance now have access to a free clinic, located in Grayling. The AuSable Free Clinic, Inc., is housed in the Grayling Professional Building, 201 Meadows Drive (off the I-75 Business Loop), and is open on Thursday evenings beginning at 5 p.m.

The clinic can treat illnesses ranging from upper respiratory problems to diabetes to joint pain to depression. Pregnancy confirmations are referred to the county Health Department. The first week it was open, seven patients were seen.

Patients may sign in between 5 and 6:30 p.m. (using their first name and last initial) to see a volunteer medical professional and are screened for eligibility. They must meet established income guidelines, and are asked to bring verification of income.

The 45-member staff consists of a physician's assistant or nurse practitioner, as well as voluntary intake clerks, respiratory therapists, pharmacists, dietitians and social workers. Examinations are performed in one of four exam rooms. The staff stays until the last patient is seen.

There is no charge for medications or treatment; however, the clinic cannot guarantee free services outside the clinic.

The facility is not meant to be a physician's office, but is intended for urgent or intermittent care. Patients may learn they qualify for Medicaid. Children under age 18 may learn they qualify for MiChild or Healthy Kids. Patients may also be referred to their local health departments for Central Health Plan B, a limited health benefit that matches primary care physicians with patients who meet the income threshold of 105% of the poverty line. Through the plan, patients receive free care, but are expected to pay a minimal co-pay of up to \$5. (Call the Roscommon County Health Department at 366-9166 for information.)

The AuSable Free Clinic's part-time director is Dawn Coleman, R.N., who also works for Mercy Hospital. She was hired by a 15-member Board of Directors led by President Monte Burmeister. The free clinic was spearheaded by Dr. Lisa Harrington of Grayling Family Practice.

Community Resource Coordinator Pat Clemens of the Department of Human Services (formerly Family Independence Agency) who served on the steering committee, said she and Martha Burns, Crawford County's Children's Services Supervisor, co-wrote the \$50,000 grant, awarded by Blue Cross Blue Shield.

BCBS awarded \$1 million to free clinics throughout the State of Michigan. Other nearby clinics to receive funds were Cadillac Community Health Clinic, Cadillac, and Bay Medical Foundation, Bay City. Grant applications were reviewed by an advisory panel with representatives from the Blues, the Detroit Medical Center, the Michigan Department of Community Health, the Michigan State Medical Society and the Michigan Osteopathic Association.

Clemens said Grayling Mercy Hospital donated the space and equipment, and offers free lab work, x-rays and prescription cards.

"We couldn't have done it without them," she said.

A non-profit organization, AuSable Free Clinic, Inc., was assisted by Roscommon County United Way, Roscommon County Community Foundation, Crawford County United Way, Mio Dummy Club, Garland Charities and the Mercy Physicians Health Organization. Clemens said fund-raising is an "ongoing process."

An open house will be held in October to celebrate the opening of the free clinic. No date has been set, but it will not be the night of a free clinic.

TOWN MEETING SEPT. 22

A town meeting, "Health Care Listening Tour" is scheduled for Sept. 22 from 4 to 7 p.m. at the University Center, Gaylord. The tour is an opportunity for Michigan citizens to air their concerns about the impact that lack of health insurance is having on them and their communities.

The Michigan Department of Community Health encourages residents to participate in order to put a face on the data that has been gathered and to hear about the impact the lack of insurance has on individuals and communities. Michigan received a federal grant to develop a plan that sets in place realistic strategies and viable options that will lead to health insurance coverage for all Michigan residents.

The Department of Community Health is looking for opinions on the following topics:

- Who are the uninsured in your community?

- Why are they uninsured?
- Who should be the “players” in covering the uninsured?
- Who should pay for health insurance?
- How has the issue of the lack of health insurance affected your community?
- What is happening in your community to address or assist those without health insurance?

Call (517) 335-1311, Project Manager Ellen Steckman-Randall for information.

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Medicare scheme alleged

Mich. woman took a million, prosecutors say

September 17, 2005

BY DAVID ASHENFELTER
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Rebecca Ann Sharp was a high roller.

During the past 2 1/2 years, the 40-year-old Ypsilanti woman claimed \$442,536 in annual earnings, owned a fleet of luxury cars and raked in \$856,298 in winnings from slot machines at casinos.

But gambling wasn't Sharp's real game, according to federal prosecutors.

They said in a criminal complaint and other court papers that Sharp and three of her companies bilked Medicare of nearly \$1 million during the past 2 1/2 years by billing the federal government for home health care for senior citizens who didn't need or never received medical treatment.

Sharp's world came crashing down Aug. 31, when FBI agents raided her home and her Southfield health care business, seizing patient records and three vehicles -- a 2001 Chevrolet Corvette, a 2002 Lincoln LS and a 2003 Lincoln Navigator. They also froze her bank accounts and obtained a court order to prevent her from disposing of her assets.

"She's out of business," Sharp's lawyer, Frederick Bellamy of Farmington Hills, said Friday. He said he believes in Sharp's innocence and that she will try to get her property back so she can restart her business.

Prosecutors asked a federal magistrate this week to dismiss the criminal complaint against Sharp pending further investigation, which is routine in ongoing federal criminal cases. Bellamy said he wouldn't be surprised if the case winds up before a federal grand jury.

Court records said Sharp did business as Continuing Senior Care of Southfield; Marketing & Assessment of Detroit, and Continuing Senior Home Care LLC of Ypsilanti.

Former employees said Sharp began operating out of the basement where she used to live in Detroit. They said she and her staff made cold calls to senior citizens and offered them medical service at home regardless of whether they were homebound or required treatment.

They also billed Medicare for nonexistent conditions, even after seniors complained that they didn't need treatment.

One former employee estimated that only 20% of the patients Sharp did business with were actually homebound and eligible for treatment. Another said only 2 in 100 were eligible.

On one day in June 2004, the government said, Sharp billed Medicare for 25.75 hours worth of service that was provided by a 66-year-old physician on her staff.

Court papers alleged that Sharp laundered money and structured bank accounts to avoid paying personal and business federal income taxes in 2003 and 2004. They said she also sold names for \$900 each to five other Detroit-area home care companies and had her doctors provide phony Medicare certification for the patients.

All told, Sharp's companies billed Medicare for \$2.8 million and received \$1.5 million in reimbursements, the government said. Authorities say they believe she fraudulently obtained \$936,465, which included \$585,054 in illegal kickbacks for selling patients' names to other

companies. They said companies to whom Sharp sold names billed Medicare for \$4.7 million, although court papers don't indicate how much was fraudulent.

Prosecutors are to ask a federal judge Wednesday to issue a preliminary injunction that would continue the Aug. 31 order preventing Sharp from disposing of any assets.

Assistant U.S. Attorney James Mitzelfeld said Friday that he couldn't comment on an ongoing investigation.

Contact DAVID ASHENFELTER at 313-223-4490 or ashenf@freepress.com.

Copper Country homelessness: Hard to see but nonetheless here

By KURT HAUGLIE, Gazette Writer

HOUGHTON - The issue of homelessness is fairly easy to see in an urban setting - people sleeping on sidewalks, in parks and in alleys. But in a rural area, homelessness might not be so apparent.

Clare Kolehmainen, case worker for the Continuum of Care for Baraga, Houghton and Keweenaw counties, said the Copper Country does have a homeless population.

Kolehmainen, who has been working for COC since June, said the fact that some people are homeless may be hidden, even to those people themselves. People who have lost their residences for whatever reason may be moving constantly to the homes of various relatives and friends.

That number includes teenagers who are no longer living with one or both parents.

"(Some) people don't consider themselves homeless," Kolehmainen said.

But those people are considered homeless by government agencies and non-government organizations which are involved with social issues.

There is no dedicated homeless shelter in the Copper Country, Kolehmainen said, but there are agencies who will provide assistance to people - usually women with small children - on a short-term basis. The Barbara Kettle Gundlach Shelter in Calumet and the Baraga Shelter Home both give temporary support to women and children displaced because of an abusive partner. The Supportive Housing for Youth Program in Houghton helps young people 16-20 years old.

Because some people don't consider themselves homeless, Kolehmainen said it's often difficult to know exactly how many people are homeless at any particular moment. In April, three of the agencies which give support to recently homeless people reported they were helping 23 people.

Kolehmainen's year-long position at the COC was created by a grant from the Council of Michigan Foundations and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

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LB

Household items no longer needed

St. Vincent Catholic Charities announced Monday that it no longer needs people to donate household items. Monetary donations still are needed, however.

Checks and money orders can be made out to St. Vincent Catholic Charities, Katrina Relief Fund, 2800 W. Willow St., Lansing, MI 48917. For more information on donating to local Katrina relief efforts, see Page 3B.

Executive Staff
Karen Stock

(from Marianne Udow)

WEEK



in Washington

September 12, 2005 · Volume XXVI · No. 31

State and Local Human Service Agencies At Forefront of Disaster Relief

State and local public human service agencies have been intensely involved in assisting tens of thousands of families affected by the Hurricane Katrina disaster, both those in the Gulf Coast states and those evacuated to locations across the nation. States have been implementing streamlined disaster policies issued by the federal agencies responsible for Medicaid, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, the Food Stamp Program (FSP), child care, and others. Numerous bills have been introduced in Congress that would provide funding and ease red tape for both recipients and states. APHSA is serving as a central repository of current information on the latest federal policies, is holding frequent conference calls between state and federal officials, and is coordinating requests from the affected states for loans of staff and other resources necessary to handle the crush of applications. APHSA has posted extensive summaries of these activities and other useful information on its web site at <http://www.aphsa.org/katrina/>.

Congress Approves Emergency Funding: House Passes TANF Legislation

On September 8, President Bush signed into law H.R. 3673, the second installment of recovery assistance in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The law makes available \$51.8 billion for emergency disaster relief and brings the total relief aid approved in the past week to \$62.3 billion. Also on September 8, the House quickly passed H.R. 3672, the TANF Emergency Response and Recovery Act of 2005, which would provide additional funds and spending flexibility under the TANF block grant. The bill would extend TANF funding beyond the current September 30 expiration date to December 31, 2005, and would also extend supplemental grants to states, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, the TANF contingency fund, and child welfare waiver authority through December 31. It would allow states serving evacuees to draw from the TANF contingency fund by changing the definition of needy states to include those that are providing short-term, non-recurring benefits to families who resided in another state with declared disaster areas. To qualify for reimbursement for payment of these benefits, a host state must determine that the evacuated families are not receiving cash benefits from their home state. H.R. 3672 would also provide a grant for up to a 20 percent increase in TANF funds for the states directly affected by the hurricane; allow states immediate access to TANF funds currently not scheduled for release until October 1, 2005; and waive certain requirements and penalties associated with TANF time limits, work requirements, and data reporting on assistance provided in these

primary disaster states throughout FY 2006. In a September 8 conference call convened by APHSA, Administration for Children and Families (ACF) officials said they will take all steps within ACF's authority to allow states the maximum flexibility under current law to serve families in need. The agency is urging states to consider non-recurrent short-term benefits to these families, thereby avoiding some of the federal work and reporting requirements. States have flexibility to use their own forms and residency requirements and may use in-kind contributions from non-government entities such as corporations and other 501(c)(3) organizations to meet their maintenance-of-effort requirement. ACF cannot waive all TANF requirements, but the secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) can view "reasonable cause" as a reason to waive certain circumstances, and the hurricane can be considered as such. More details of the ACF advice to states are on the APHSA web site.

House and Senate Consider Emergency Medicaid Legislation

A number of bills have been introduced in the House and Senate to provide emergency Medicaid assistance. Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.) and 11 co-sponsors introduced the Temporary Disaster Relief Medicaid Act of 2005 (H.R. 3698), which would provide Medicaid coverage to evacuees in whatever state they seek refuge and make it easier for providers to give the necessary care to affected individuals. It also provides full federal assistance for one year for the three states hit by the hurricane and for individuals from those states who have relocated to other states. The bill also would provide for Medicaid-eligible individuals displaced by the hurricane so they will not be at a disadvantage for coverage under the Medicare Modernization Act (MMA). In the Senate, Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.) and 20 co-sponsors introduced the Katrina Emergency Relief Act of 2005 (S. 1637), which would make low-income Katrina survivors from Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama eligible for medical assistance in any state. The legislation would authorize uniform eligibility rules in that "no income, resource, residency, or categorical eligibility requirements" will be applied upon enrollment; allow a common one-page application form; guarantee drug coverage for Medicare-eligible individuals; and temporarily suspend the MMA clawback provision. The measure would also provide 100 percent federal financing of the Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentage (FMAP) for services to low-income Katrina survivors and any administrative costs incurred as a result of the bill's provisions. Fiscal year 2005 FMAP rates for any state are currently scheduled for an FMAP reduction for FY 2006 as of October 2005. Two other Senate bills include one sponsored by Sen.

Max Baucus (D-Mont.) to provide tax incentives and address healthcare needs for those affected in the Gulf Coast region. It temporarily extends federal funding of Medicaid drug benefits for dual eligibles and delays the transition of duals to Medicare Part D. The measure also temporarily waives Medicare Part B and Part D late-enrollment penalties. The bill relaxes the income and assets tests included in the Medicare Part D Low-Income Subsidy Application for evacuees. Also in the Senate, Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-Ark.) introduced an amendment (S.Amdt. 1652) to an unrelated House bill, H.R. 2862, that contained many of the provisions from Reid's bill. The Lincoln measure would make all displaced persons below the federal poverty level eligible for Medicaid and provide full federal match for Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi, and for displaced individuals from those three states.

CMS Announces Emergency Medicaid Policies for Evacuees and States

On September 9, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) adopted a series of emergency policy changes to accommodate the needs of displaced Medicaid and SCHIP beneficiaries who have fled Hurricane Katrina and need urgent medical attention in their new host states. The policies were consistent with an administration directive announced by President Bush on September 8 to grant special evacuee status to a wide range of assistance program recipients who have fled because of the hurricane. CMS is working with affected states to develop a new Medicaid and SCHIP application template through which states may be granted emergency Section 1115 demonstrations to provide temporary eligibility for all eligibility groups. Evacuees will then be able to quickly enroll in Medicaid or SCHIP in the state to which they have been evacuated. Applications will be accepted retroactively from August 24, 2005. CMS said it is working to provide financial support to states that give Medicaid and SCHIP coverage to evacuees who are currently residing in their states. CMS is allowing states to count the anticipated full cost of these temporary programs in their financial statements to determine federal payments. The special Section 1115 initiatives will cover waiver of the normal document requirements verifying recipients' Medicaid or SCHIP status in their home states or any information relating to household income or employment; provision of temporary eligibility to applicants who are already enrollees in their home state; and allowing evacuees to apply using a simplified application in the host state. Host states, at a minimum, will provide their own Medicaid and SCHIP benefit packages to the evacuees; must extend the expedited application process to evacuees who may be newly eligible because of new economic circumstances created by the hurricane; and must submit their estimated expenditures to CMS as a component of their usual cost reporting for determining federal payments.

APHSAs Issues Child Welfare Information; McDermott Bill Addresses Foster Care Needs

On September 9, APHSA issued a detailed memo to its members on child welfare issues related to Hurricane Katrina. The memo includes information on tracking children displaced by the hurricane; cross-checking against other information on missing children; adoption assistance and foster care maintenance payments; medical assistance; the number of foster and adoptive children with special needs who are potentially displaced; education of children left homeless by the hurricane; and information on the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). The memo is posted on the APHSA web site at <http://www.aphsa.org/katrina/childwelfare.asp>. Additional details on HIPAA are available in an HHS Office of Civil Rights bulletin that provides HIPAA disclosure rules and procedures during emergency situations; the bulletin is at www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/KATRINAnHIPAA.pdf. On September 8, Rep. Jim McDermott (D-Wash.) introduced the Emergency Action for Vulnerable Children Act (H.R. 3711). The bill would, for a 12-month period beginning in September 2005, ensure that all services and assistance to foster children from the affected hurricane area are paid for by the federal government; eliminate the "bureaucratic barriers" foster children and foster parents face before becoming eligible for foster care assistance; and ensure that services like mental health treatment for children will be financed by the federal government.

Child Care Bureau Announces State Flexibility Options for Disaster Response

On September 9, the Child Care Bureau issued an Information Memorandum (ACYF-IM-CC-05-03) that outlines state flexibility in using the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) in response to Hurricane Katrina. The memo, available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/policy1/current/im0503/im0503.htm>, says that states may use the 4 percent quality set-aside to provide emergency child care to evacuees; have flexibility in changing the eligibility criteria for CCDF-funded child care; may waive income eligibility and work requirements for children who receive or need to receive protective services; may use the quality set-aside for grants to providers to increase the supply of child care; and may use TANF and other funds may be used to increase the resources available for child care. Sen. Reid's bill, the Katrina Emergency Relief Act (S. 1637), would direct the secretary of HHS to award grants to states demonstrating large influxes of children displaced by the hurricane to provide early childhood education services.

FNS Issues Disaster Food Stamp Policies; Senate Bills Would Streamline Procedures

On September 9, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) posted information on its web site, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/>, that implements a one-month policy for certifying evacuees who have fled the disaster areas in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi because of



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Hurricane Katrina. The policy, which applies only for September 2005, provides for a one-month maximum food stamp benefit for any evacuee household, based simply on evacuee status and without regard to income, resources, or participation status in the household's home state. Qualifying households will receive the maximum allotment for their household size. The web site includes a number of other documents outlining special treatment of evacuee households beyond one month, flexibility in granting separate household status to displaced families, and information numbers. On September 8, Senators Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) introduced the Hurricane Katrina Food Assistance Relief Act of 2005. The bill would extend several disaster policies already issued by FNS for a period not to exceed the end of FY 2006. The bill would also change other procedures and rules for households affected by the disaster. These changes would streamline application procedures, increase disaster allotments by 10 percent, and increase gross income limits and liberalize resource rules, including the exclusion of all vehicles owned by disaster survivors. Administrative changes would include having the federal government pay 100 percent of all administrative costs rather than requiring state match as at present; holding states harmless from all quality-control errors in disaster cases; and waiving any claims for inaccurate issuances to affected households except in cases of fraud. The bill also provides emergency funding for other federal nutrition assistance programs.

Budget Reconciliation Schedule Pushed Back

On September 7, Republican congressional leaders announced that budget reconciliation would be postponed for at least two weeks so Congress can adequately respond to Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. Under terms of the FY 2006 budget resolution, the original schedule had called for authorizing committees to report out spending cut legislation by September 16, and the House Ways and Means and Senate Finance committees to produce tax cut legislation by September 23. The resolution includes a \$35 billion, five-year package of mandatory spending cuts and a \$70 billion package of tax cuts that would be protected from multiple amendments and filibuster on the Senate floor. These budget reductions would have significant impact on human service programs, with the Finance Committee alone expected to produce \$10 billion in spending reductions, mostly from Medicaid. Among the calls for delaying the process were four senators (Olympia Snowe, R-Maine; Gordon Smith, R-Ore.; Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M.; and Blanche Lincoln, D-Ark.) who sent a letter to Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa), chair of the Finance Committee, asking that he indefinitely delay the portions of the reconciliation that would cut entitlement programs. Grassley released a statement saying that additional resources will be needed for the Medicaid program, and that he plans to provide those resources separate from the reconciliation in a Katrina relief package.

Medicaid Commission Releases Short-Term Reform Recommendations

On September 1, the administration-appointed Medicaid Commission released its report on ways to achieve at least \$10 billion in savings to Medicaid over five years. The final report contains six reform proposals that will result in an estimated \$11 billion in program savings over five years. The six recommendations for Medicaid include changing the prescription drug reimbursement formula to be based on average manufacturer price instead of the average wholesale price that is currently used; extending the

Medicare Drug Rebate Program to Medicaid Managed Care; changing the start date of the penalty period for individuals transferring assets to achieve Medicaid eligibility; increasing the "look-back" period for asset transfers from three to five years; instituting a tiered co-pay system for prescription drugs; and reforming the Medicaid Managed Care Organization Provider Tax requirement so provider taxes would be applied uniformly. The recommendations presented in the report were agreed to unanimously at the August 17-18 public meeting held in Washington. The commission was formed last spring and tasked with releasing recommendations on short-term reforms by September 1 so those recommendations could be considered in the reconciliation process. The commission is also to release proposals for long-term Medicaid reform by December 2006. The commission's next meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 26-27. The full commission report is available at www.nasmd.org under the heading "Medicaid Commission."

House Energy and Commerce Committee Holds Medicaid Hearing

On September 8, the House Energy and Commerce Committee, chaired by Rep. Joe Barton (R-Tex.), held a hearing titled "Medicaid: Empowering Beneficiaries on the Road to Reform." Republican committee members expressed a desire to press ahead with the \$10 billion in savings to the Medicaid program, while Democratic members said Congress should reevaluate the wisdom of those changes in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Witnesses included David Parrella, Connecticut's Medicaid director, and leaders from the health care and insurance industries. Parrella's testimony included the following recommendations: continue the expansion of managed care; remove federal barriers to innovative management of dual eligibles; expand state flexibility on benefit design and cost-sharing for populations above the poverty level; restrict asset transfers; maximize third-party resources through premium assistance; pay pharmacists as service providers; and pay providers for performance. Questions from the committee focused on addressing the inefficiencies in the Medicaid program. Some members also asked why the savings from the program could not be reinvested to improve Medicaid rather than making cuts to the total federal program spending. Members also asked what states are doing to address rising Medicaid costs. Parrella said the vast majority of states have instituted some form of preferred drug lists in attempting to address the high prices of pharmaceuticals. On a related issue, Rep. Heather Wilson (R-N.M.) stated her support for a letter sent by New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson (D) to HHS Secretary Michael Leavitt calling for the government to classify victims of Hurricane Katrina as refugees to assure states of 100 percent federal reimbursement for medical expenses. All testimony and a complete web cast of the hearing are available at <http://energycommerce.house.gov/108/Hearings/09082005hearing1632/hearing.htm>.

CMS Seeks Comments on PERM and DSH

On August 26, CMS published notices that it is seeking comments on the Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) Payments under the MMA and the proposed Payment Error Rate Measurement (PERM) system in Medicaid and SCHIP. The DSH payments notice is a proposed rule for implementation, and comments are due by October 25. On PERM, CMS is seeking comments on several aspects of the PERM system, including the use of federal contractors to conduct the reviews. Comments are due by September 25, 2005. Both notices appeared in the August 26 *Federal Register*. More information on the DSH notice is available at <http://frwebgate3.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/waisgate.cgi?WAISdocID=21807312493+3+0+0&WAIAction=retrieve>. Details on the PERM notice are available at <http://frwebgate5.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/waisgate.cgi?WAISdocID=217289140452+2+2+0&WAIAction=retrieve>.

House Passes Higher Education Relief Bill for Students Impacted by Hurricane Katrina

On September 8, the House unanimously passed the Student Grant Hurricane and Disaster Relief Act, H.R. 3886. The measure would amend the Higher Education Act to allow the secretary of Education to waive grant aid repayment requirements for students impacted by natural disasters. The legislation, which was introduced by Rep. Bobby Jindal (R-La.), is available at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

USDA Announces Next Farm Bill Forums

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced additional forums on the next farm bill. The department has been holding a series of forums around the country to which the public is invited to attend and offer comments on the farm bill, which must be reauthorized in 2007. This newest series includes two specialty forums that will be hosted by USDA Undersecretary Eric Bost and that will focus on federal nutrition assistance programs. The two events are September 29 in New York City at the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House Auditorium and September 30 in Cheyenne, Wyo., at the Little America Hotel. Full details are available on the USDA web site at http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdafarmbill?navtype=SU&navid=FARM_BILL_FORUMS.

This Week "Goes Electronic" Effective October 21

Beginning with the October 21 edition, *TWW* will be provided to subscribers exclusively as an electronic publication. If you are a currently a subscriber to the paper edition, please forward your e mail address as soon as possible to Demetrius Williams of the APHSA staff, dwilliams@aphsa.org.

Executive Staff
Karen Stock

(from Marianne Udow)

WEEK

in Washington

APHSA
American Public Human Services Association

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Senate Passes House TANF Emergency Relief Bill

On September 15, the Senate passed by unanimous consent the TANF Emergency Response and Recovery Act of 2005, H.R. 3672, which the House had approved on September 8. The president is expected to sign the bill today. The legislation would provide additional funds and spending flexibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant. This bill would extend the welfare reform law, due to expire on September 30, to December 31, 2005. This extension includes TANF, the TANF supplemental grants to states, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, and the TANF contingency fund. H.R. 3672 also would extend authority of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to approve child welfare waiver demonstrations and conduct the National Random Sample Study of Child Welfare through December 31, 2005. With regard to Hurricane Katrina victims, the bill would allow states serving evacuees with short-term assistance to draw from the TANF contingency fund. States would not be required to pay a match or meet the 100 percent maintenance-of-effort requirement to access the contingency fund. For states to qualify for reimbursement for payment of these short-term cash benefits to evacuees, the evacuee may not be receiving cash benefits from the home state. H.R. 3672 would also provide a grant for up to a 20 percent increase in TANF funds for Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana. The bill would also waive certain requirements and penalties associated with TANF time limits and work requirements for the three affected states.

President Proposes Initiatives for Disaster Areas

On September 15, in a televised speech from New Orleans, President Bush outlined several proposals to help communities and individuals in the region hit by Hurricane Katrina. He proposed a Gulf Opportunity Zone with incentives to encourage job-creating investment, tax relief for small businesses, and other steps to encourage business investment. He also proposed Worker Recovery Accounts to help evacuees needing extra help finding work. These evacuees would receive accounts of up to \$5,000 for job training, education and child care expenses during job search. Bush also proposed an Urban Homesteading Act that contains incentives for low-income families to build homes on property in the region owned by the federal government. The package would include waivers to reimburse states that have taken in large numbers of evacuees for their extra Medicaid and uncompensated care expenses incurred through January 31, 2006. The full text of the president's remarks is available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/09/20050915-8.html>.

Baucus and Grassley Introduce Katrina Health Relief Bill; Includes TANF Changes

On September 15, Senate Finance Committee Chair Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) and Ranking Member Max Baucus (D-Mont.) introduced S. 1716, the Emergency Health Care Relief Act of 2005, designed to address the health and welfare needs of Hurricane Katrina survivors. Provisions include 100 percent Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) for affected states from August 28, 2005, through December 31, 2006, and a one-year postponement of any FMAP reductions scheduled for fiscal year 2006. It would also provide Disaster Relief Medicaid (DRM) for individuals from the hardest-hit areas of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama in home or host states. DRM would include streamlined eligibility and enrollment with a common application and documentation requirements; full coverage for all individuals up to 100 percent of the federal poverty line (FPL) and pregnant women and children up to 200 percent of FPL; and extended mental health benefits for up to 100 percent of FPL. DRM would provide temporary eligibility for up to five months initially but could be extended by the president or secretary of HHS. Other Medicaid provisions would amend Section 1135 waiver authority to allow the secretary to extend benefits to all displaced individuals; give emergency assistance to providers, including a Disaster Relief Fund to offset increased Medicaid services and uncompensated care by Medicaid providers; provide emergency assistance to Medicare beneficiaries by waiving Part B late enrollment penalties and requiring HHS to submit by October 7 a plan for transitioning dual-eligible residents and evacuees from disaster areas to Part D; and provide emergency assistance for individuals with private health coverage through assistance for employer or employee shares of coverage. Title II of S. 1716 would affect the TANF program by modifying several key sections of H.R. 3672, including making reimbursements to states retroactive to August 29, 2005, rather than on the date of enactment. It would also allow the three states directly affected to have easier access to the TANF contingency fund. It would allow states to draw down up to 25 percent of their monthly payment from their contingency fund allotment rather than 1/12, as provided in the House bill; provide grants for up to a 40 percent increase in TANF funds for the three states directly affected; and provide additional flexibility for families receiving assistance between August 29, 2005, and September 30, 2006. The text of the bill will be posted at <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.

Congress Delays Reconciliation Plans

On September 12, the House and Senate announced plans to delay the budget reconciliation process until October 26, 2005. Under the budget resolution, congressional committees were instructed to cut \$35 billion in mandatory program spending by September 16, and an additional \$70 billion in tax cuts from the tax-writing committees by September 26. The delay came in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the congressional response to providing necessary relief to areas devastated by the storm. Under the original reconciliation plans, the Finance Committee alone was expected to produce \$10 billion in spending reductions, mostly from Medicaid. In a floor statement on September 12, Senate Budget Committee Chair Judd Gregg (R-N.H.) restated his desire to continue the reconciliation process this year. He commented that Congress will take the necessary steps to provide help to states in the Gulf region, but that this aid will be a one-time spending event while the reconciliation instructions aim to find long-term savings.

Disaster Food Stamp Program Operating in 3 States

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has approved the Disaster Food Stamp Program (DFSP) to operate in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. In Louisiana, the DFSP has been in effect since last week, and as of September 14 the state had issued about 265,000 disaster electronic benefit transfer cards worth nearly \$100 million. Extensions of various DFSP provisions have been approved or are pending for certain areas of the state. In Mississippi, the DFSP was effective September 13, and the state is mobilizing several hundred eligibility workers to process applications in the southern portion of the state. In Alabama, the DFSP will begin September 19 and will include several major sites that will utilize workers from other states. The American Public Human Services Association has coordinated logistics of the loaned staff efforts over the past week. Other states have certified large numbers of evacuees under special evacuee policies issued by FNS, including more than 110,000 households in Texas. Other states with significant numbers of evacuee food stamp households include Florida (nearly 11,000 as of September 14), Georgia (7,500), Tennessee (2,900), and Arkansas (6,300). FNS has recently updated four Katrina policy documents on its web site. The National Enhanced Policy for Evacuees was updated September 14 and clarifies that the policy is applicable to evacuees who apply in both September and October, and to evacuees who move within a state (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/rules/Memo/05/nationalehancedpolicy.pdf>). The Expanded Disaster Evacuee Policy was also updated September 14; it extends the application period to the end of October and clarifies that normal program rules apply beginning with the January 2006 issuance (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/rules/Memo/05/ee-policy.pdf>). The questions and answers issued on these policies were amended on September 14 with several modified answers and one new one (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/rules/Memo/05/qas.pdf>). The rules for accepting food stamp benefits for hot foods were updated September 13; the policy is extended through November 30 and has been expanded to additional areas (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/retailers/pdfs/special-rules.pdf>).

Sex Offender Registration Background Check Bill OK'd

On September 14, the House passed the Children's Safety Act of 2005, H.R. 3132. The legislation would require each state to maintain a sex offender registry and require the U.S. attorney general to maintain a National Sex Offender Registry at the FBI. The bill

would expand the scope of DNA samples and increase penalties for violent crimes or sexual offenses against children. The bill contains the Foster Child Protection and Child Sexual Predator Sentencing Act of 2005, which requires background checks and checks of national crime information databases and state child abuse registries before approval of foster or adoptive placements. The bill would eliminate the opt-out provision in current law regarding criminal background checks. The legislation was sponsored by Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.). More information on the bill is available at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

Bill Addresses Child Abuse and Neglect Courts and Interstate Placements

On September 12, Senators Mike DeWine (R-Ohio) and John D. Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) introduced the Working to Enhance Courts for At-Risk and Endangered Kids Act of 2005, S. 1679. The bill would require the establishment of state child welfare commissions, training of court personnel, and performance standards for courts. The legislation also contains provisions aimed at improving timely interstate placements and elimination of the opt-out provision in current law regarding criminal background checks. On September 13, Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) introduced the Foster Our Future Act of 2005, H.R. 3758. The bill contains provisions on child abuse and neglect courts, but not on timely interstate placements for criminal background checks. Both bills can be viewed at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

Department of Labor Releases Katrina Training Grants

On September 14, the Department of Labor (DOL) announced \$12 million in grants to Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas to help with Katrina-related recovery. Each state will receive funds to train workers in critical local industries such as construction, energy, health care, and transportation. Funding will be used for short-term training that allows displaced workers to gain employment in the redevelopment of the Gulf region. The training will be coordinated through technical schools and community college programs that lead to industry-recognized certifications, licenses, or degrees. The grants will also help the public workforce investment system provide referral assistance to place trainees in jobs where there is a critical need. DOL has also made resources available to states that have been impacted by the hurricane under the National Emergency Grants. States can apply for and use such funds to provide disaster relief including employment training, food, clothing, shelter, and other assistance for victims. Additional information is available on the DOL web site at www.dol.gov.

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